

**DRAFT GUIDELINES FOR
IDOL IMMERSION
IN THE STATE OF TRIPURA**



**TRIPURA STATE POLLUTION CONTROL BOARD
(DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT)**

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1. Background

Hon'ble High Court of Mumbai in its order dated 22/07/2008 in the matter of Public Interest Litigation (PIL)/W.P.(C) NO. 1325/2003 gave the following directions:

“We expect that the Central Govt. will consider laying down of guidelines for immersion of idols and would also consider related matters with regard to pollution of water bodies. Both the Union Government as well as the State Government shall consider it expeditiously because the time lost involving the pollution might prove dangerous for environment of the country in long run.”

In pursuance to the directions of the Hon'ble Court, the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) prepared and circulated guidelines to all the stakeholders in 2010 for ensuring its implementation. Based on these, Government of Tripura issued a notification no. F.11(78)/DSTE/ENV/Pt-I/12-40 dated 02/01/2018 (**Annexure I**) that contained several directions in regard to use of eco-friendly materials in idol making in the light of guidelines dated 18/06/2010 framed by Central Pollution Control Board (**Annexure II**) for the protection of ecology & environment in the State. The said notification has also fixed responsibilities of idol makers/manufacturers & Organizers, local bodies, Tripura State Pollution Control Board, and made provisions of penalty for violations of the guidelines in the State. However, this notification did not provide any direction on idol immersion, and pre- and post-immersion management of solid materials.

Subsequently, CPCB revised the guidelines for idol immersion on 12/05.2020 (**Annexure III**) keeping in view some developments in terms of substitutes for various materials used for idol making as well as disposal of idol immersions in temporary designated ponds/tanks, safe disposal of solid wastes generated during immersion activities, development of a system whereby manufacturers or craftsman or artisans themselves can collect, transport and reuse the idols for reuse, and after taking views of stakeholders, the revised guidelines were discussed with all the stakeholders for its implementation in an interaction meeting held on 18/11/2021 in the conference hall of the TSPCB.

Objectives

In pursuance to the revised guidelines circulated by the CPCB, an urgency has been felt by the Tripura State Pollution Control Board (TSPCB) to prepare guidelines for idol immersion, and post-immersion solid waste management in the State of Tripura without affecting the quality of water bodies while ensuring religious observance.

These guidelines cover aspects of material used in idol making, regulation of idol immersion and post-immersion collection and disposal of solid wastes, and avoiding noise pollution during festival days. Roles of Puja Organizing Committees (POC), artisans and craftsmen, police, local administration, and the State Pollution Control Board have been defined to ensure that all aspects of religious activities, including idol making, idol immersion, and noise level occur in keeping with the traditions and emerging demands of avoiding pollution to water bodies and ambient air quality.

Guidelines for Idol Makers/Artisans/Craftsmen

- (i) Every idol maker/artisan/craftsman shall have to seek registration from the concerned Urban Local bodies (ULBs) on a payment of fees as prescribed by the ULBs for making idols according to the guidelines stated below and as notified by the Government of Tripura.
- (ii) Idols shall be made up of only natural, bio-degradable, eco-friendly raw materials (example, natural clay). Use of toxic, inorganic raw materials such as ceramics, porcelain, or mixture of clay and refined silica or stone dust or Plaster of Paris (PoP), plastic and thermocol (polystyrene) is **not** allowed.
- (iii) Only dried flower components, straw, etc. are allowed for making ornaments of idols and natural resins of trees may be used as a shining material for making idols attractive.
- (iv) Use of eco-friendly water-based, bio-degradable and non-toxic natural colours from flowers, barks, roots, seeds, whole fruits mineral or

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colour crocks is allowed. Use of toxic and non-biodegradable chemical dyes/oil paints for painting idols is strictly prohibited. Enamel and synthetic dye-based paints on idols are not permitted.

- (v) For beautification of idols, removable and washable decorative clothes made of natural materials like cotton or jute etc. are permitted. Synthetic fibre clothes and synthetic paints and other toxic chemicals are not permitted.
- (vi) Bamboos/bamboo sticks/wood shall be used in making idol frame and straw shall be used as stuffing material. No artificial or synthetic material shall be used for these purposes.

Guidelines for Puja Organizing Committees

- (i) Every Puja Organizing Committee shall obtain advance permission from the concerned ULBs in a prescribed form providing necessary details of the height of idol and pandal, and submit declaration to the effect that it shall observe all the conditions/guidelines/directions of organizing an idol puja.
- (ii) Idols up to a maximum of 20 feet height and pandals up to a maximum of 40 feet height from the ground level are permitted. The ideal height ratio of an idol to a pandal shall be 1:2 at the maximum, that is a pandal height shall not be more than twice the height of an idol, keeping in view the hazard of fire and its control.
- (iii) As far as possible, low height and eco-friendly idols (made with natural clay, idols stuffed with eco-friendly materials like straws) and decorated with biodegradable organic colours only should be used.
- (iv) In the interest of protection of the environment, Puja Organizing Committees shall procure eco-friendly idols only from the respective ULBs registered craftsman/artisans/idol makers.
- (v) Eco-friendly food materials are permitted for offering pujas.
- (vi) For prasad distribution and other purposes, only biodegradable plates made with broad dried leaves such as Areca (Supari)/Banana/Banyan/Sal leaves, biodegradable paper cups/plates and earthen pots shall be used. Use of

single use plastics and polystyrene (Thermocol) are not permitted in any form.

- (vii) Worship material like flowers, leaves, clothes, decorating materials (made of paper and bio-degradable or compostable plastic but no single use plastic) etc. shall be removed before immersion of idols and segregated in colour coded bins provided at the designated idol immersion areas/spots.
- (viii) Every Puja Committee shall pay an '*Immersion Cost*' to the concerned ULBs towards making temporary ponds/tanks for idol immersion, and also for making arrangements of safe disposal of pre- and post-immersion solid materials. Immersion cost as prescribed by the concerned ULBs shall be payable at the time of seeking permission from the concerned ULBs.
- (ix) After idol immersion, every registered idol makers/artisans/craftsman shall remove clay, bamboos/bamboo sticks and straw from the immersion sites in association with volunteers of the Puja Committees free-of-charge, arrange their transport, and reuse these as per their convenience.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Urban and Local Authorities

I. For Idol Makers/Artisans/Craftsmen

- (i) Annual Registration may be granted by Urban and bodies within the respective jurisdiction on a payment of prescribed fees to only those Idol manufacturers or makers or craftsman or artisans who uses only eco-friendly natural clay materials (but not PoP or baked clay) in making idols, prior to festive times.
- (ii) While granting registration to the idol makers, a list of permitted and non-permitted substances to be used for making coloring and decorating idols shall be provided to the Idol makers/craftsman/artisans. Tripura State Pollution Control Board shall prepare and provide the list of substances.
- (iii) Only registered idol makers/craftsmen/artisans shall be strictly allowed to make idols within the jurisdiction of the respective Urban and Local Bodies.

II. For Idol Immersion and Management of Solid Waste Materials

- (i) As far as possible, ULBs shall not allow immersion of idols in natural water bodies in any part of the State.
- (ii) Instead, the puja organisers or resident welfare associations or resident groups or individual households in a city or town or semi-urban areas shall carry out idol immersion in temporary ponds/tanks of suitable size and adequate capacity at suitable locations in respective areas with necessary arrangement for collection and storage of segregated waste prior to immersion.
- (iii) Arrangements for temporary artificial idol immersion ponds or tanks on the banks of water bodies or temporary enclosing with all necessary safety provisions and waste collection facilities prior to idol immersion shall be arranged by the concerned ULBs and other Departments in association with the Puja Organizing Committees.
- (iv) Water in the temporary or artificial immersion ponds or tanks may be drawn from the nearby water body.
- (v) All the immersion sites shall preferably be lined with plastic (HDPE) sheets in the bottom and on all sides of the temporary pond/tank to prevent leeching of any polluting substance in to the soil/earth.
- (vi) In case the immersion of idols in rivers, lakes or ponds is inevitable, a designated location (having proper approach, access, corner portion of a river/lake/pond, having shallow depth of water should be identified and safety provision by way of wooden or stiff bamboo barricades shall be made by concerned ULBs to avoid any loss of life during immersion activities. According to the need Public address system and adequate light in the immersion site shall be made for the regulation and control of safe immersion activities.
- (vii) Water bodies such as ponds or lakes or a part of the river shall be cordoned off and barricaded by ULBs with all other necessary provisions keeping in

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view safety of the public (such as proper access, approach roads, sign boards, fire safety measure, barricades, designated space for keeping idols prior to immersion, suitable platform with crane provision for idol immersion).

- (viii) Idol immersion, in all cases, shall be limited to a partial dip of the idol in surface water without drowning the idol deep in water; soon after the partial dip, the idol shall be removed to a designated site for disposal of solid waste materials.
- (ix) There shall be colour coded bins of adequate sizes for collection of solid materials before and after immersion of idols; green colour bins for biodegradable solid like papers, flowers/clothes/fruits/food or prasad remains, etc., yellow colour bins for non-biodegradable solids like bamboos, Woods, canes, straws, etc. and red colour bins for hazardous substances like glass, metals, plastics, etc.
- (x) Clothes, ornaments, flowers and other decorative materials shall be removed from the idol before immersion by the Puja Organizers. These will be segregated and placed in colour coded bins and disposed safely by the concerned ULBs within 24 hours of completion of the idol immersion activity in accordance with the prevailing provisions of Solid Waste Management Rules 2016, and amendments there to.
- (xi) Post-idol immersion, clay, bamboos/woods, and straws will be recovered for reuse by the idol makers who will be responsible for collection, removal and transportation of these materials from the immersion site within 24 hours of immersion. If not collected, the concerned ULBs shall arrange their disposal to nearest composting centres for converting in to organic manure.
- (xii) Waste collection sites shall be located. in the vicinity of the designated temporary/artificial idol immersion sites.
- (xiii) After completion of the idol immersion ceremony, within 24 hours, the plastic liner material shall be removed from temporary ponds/tanks and these shall be filled with native soil and levelled properly.
- (xiv) A Co-ordination Committee comprising of local Police Station, Non-Government Organizations, T SPCB, representatives of Puja Organizing

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Committees and other concerned stakeholders may be set up for guiding the public in carrying out the immersion without affecting environmental damages to the water bodies.

- (xv) To ensure safe immersion of idols during festive season, ULBs shall deploy adequate number of staff at all the designated idol immersion spots under overall supervision of a Nodal Officer to be designated by the concerned ULBs. The Nodal Officers also shall co-ordinate with the Co-ordination Committee constituted by the ULBs.
- (xvi) Details regarding designated temporary or artificial immersion spots or areas shall be notified, and public as well as Puja Organizing Committees shall be made aware of it preferably at least one week in advance of idol immersion through electronic and local media in vernacular language.
- (xvii) Sanitary workers shall be deployed at all the temporary immersion sites for ensuring removal of bio-degradable items like flowers, leaves, clothes, ornaments etc. prior to idol immersion at the designated areas.
- (xviii) Littering or burning of solid wastes comprising of used flowers, ecorating materials, recovered material such as bamboo and wooden logs, straw structures etc. so generated at the immersion sites or on the banks of water body shall be prohibited strictly.
- (xix) After completion of immersion, only lime or alum shall be added in the water body for coagulation of insoluble micro solid like clay, colour, etc. and their sedimentation in the bottom. Supernatant water may be allowed to flow into river/pond/lake, as the case may be, after checking for colour and turbidity as per the CPCB prescribed water quality parameters.
- (xx) Concerned ULB Authorities may also consider option of construction of permanent cemented large sized artificial tanks for immersion of idols at suitable places for a village or town or city to avoid direct immersion of idols into lakes/rivers/ ponds/sea.

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- (i) Individual households should be encouraged to use only eco-friendly idols made of natural clay and bio-degradable materials as decorative and pooja materials.
- (ii) As far as possible, immersion of small idols should be done at their homes in eco-friendly manner i.e., in a bucket filled with water and idol be kept in immersed state until it dissolves completely. After settlement of settleable and colloidal solids (if required alum or lime powder or any other equivalent coagulant may be mixed and stirred vigorously using a stick at least for 30 seconds and thereafter slow mixing at least for 30 seconds and then allowed to settle), the supernatant liquid may be used either in gardening or discharged in a drain. Settled mud can be dried and then reused further for future idol making or may be used in gardening as soil).
- (iii) In case, individual households intend to perform idol immersions, then they must obtain advance permission from the concerned ULBs and idols shall be immersed only in the designated temporary artificial ponds or tanks located nearby or a designated bank of river or lake or pond.

Guidelines for the Tripura State Pollution Control Board (TSPCB)

- (i) TSPCB shall prepare lists of permitted and not-permitted substances for use in the making, coloring, and decorating of idols.
- (ii) TSPCB shall conduct water quality assessment of the water bodies in Class-I cities as per the CPCB guidelines (having population more than one lac), at three stages, i.e., Pre-immersion, during immersion and post-immersion. During post-festival, samples shall be collected preferably after 3rd, 5th, 7th and 9th day of the festival.
- (iii) For ascertaining water quality, Physico-chemical parameters such as pH, DO, Color, BOD, COD, Conductivity, Turbidity, TDS, Chloride, TSS, Hardness, Total Alkalinity and Metals shall be analyzed as per the CPCB guidelines.
- (iv) Detailed reports shall be posted on the TSPCB's website in public domain and also shall be shared with Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Ministry of Jal Shakti and CPCB, within two months of completion of

last sampling conducted for a particular festival.

- (v) TSPCB shall help ULBs and District Administration in preparing material for creating mass awareness purposes such as: **a.** on the ill effects of toxic components of coloring materials used not only of the idols, **b.** use of eco-friendly decorating materials, and **c.** for immersing idols only in designated temporary artificial ponds or tanks. Puja Organizing Committees shall be involved in this process.
- (vi) TSPCB shall issue specific leaflets and posters for mass awareness in vernacular languages and displayed at salient points with the helps of Eco Clubs, NGOs, Education Institutes/Universities and Schools.

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Major Types of Natural Dyes and Their Origin

Chemical class	Coloringmatter	Origin	Color obtained
Vat dyes			
Indole	Indigotin	Garden Pea flower	Blues
Quinone	Juglone	Walnut	Browns
Mordant dyes			
Anthraquinones	Alizarin	Madder roots	Reds, oranges, browns
	Pseudo purpurin	Madder roots	Reds, oranges, browns
	Munising	Munjeetstem, Hibiscus flowers	Reds, browns, maroons
	Laccaicacids	Lac insects	Reds, purples, Maroons
Flavoid tannins	Catechin	Cutch	Browns, grays
Saffron, Flavone	Luteolin	Weld	Yellows, khaki
Flavanol	Quercetin	50% of all plants	Yellows, khaki
Anthocyanins	Cyanidin	Elderberries	Purples
Neoflavanoid ones	Hematoxylin	Logwood	Violets, blacks
	Brazilin	Brazilwood	Reds, purples
Isoflavone	Pterocarpan	Sanders wood	Oranges
Direct dyes			
Carotenoid	Curcumin	Turmeric	Yellows
	Crocin	Saffron, gardenia	Yellows
Alkaloid	Berberine	Mahoniawood	Yellows
Orcinol	Orcein	Orchil	Purples
Benzoquinone	Carthamine	Safflower	Pinks
Reactive dyes			
Depsides	Atranorin	Lichens	Fawns
Depsidones	Salazinic acid	Lichens	Browns

Source:- Eco-friendly dyes and dyeing (<http://sciedtech.eu/journals/advmtenvsci/current-issue/>)